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THE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST TEXAS MUNICIPALITY.

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[In the preparation of this article three original manuscripts have been consulted and these will be referred to by appropriate abbreviations, as follows: (1) "Historia del Descubrimiento y Poblacion de Texas hasta el año de 1730. Escrita por el Padre J. Melchor y Talamantes," will be referred to as "Talamantes." The original of this is found in the Archivo General de Mexico, Seccion de Historia, Tomo 43. (2) The collection of the various decrees relating to the transportation of settlers from the Canary Islands to Texas is found in Volume 84 of the same section, under the title "Colonos para Texas." Reference will be made to the separate decrees and reports. (3) "Representacion de la Villa de Sⁿ Fernando al S^r Gobernador de Texas, Varon de Ripperda," is found in Volume 28 of the same section. The manuscript will be referred to simply as "Representacion."—I. J. C.]

Previous to 1730, Spanish operations in Texas were either of a military or religious character, and were only temporary in effect. The object of the Spanish authorities, to prevent the encroachments of the French upon Texas territory, was but imperfectly realized. After three successive attempts, the missions of Eastern Texas were abandoned. The only result of four costly *entradas* by the governors of Coahuila was the extension of the frontier line of Spanish occupation from the Rio Grande to the San Antonio river, where five struggling missions and a presidial garrison of forty-three men remained as the only outposts of Spanish civilization in Texas.

The method of reducing the province by the combined efforts of missionary and soldier had resulted in utter failure. The reasons for this are not hard to find. In the first place, the friars were working with hopeless material. The Texas Indians had neither the aptitude nor the desire for civilization. Then the scanty returns of the friars' labor were wholly lost by lack of support, at critical times, from the home government. This may have been due, in a measure, to some possible dissension between the rival Franciscan colleges of Querétaro and Zacatecas.¹ But even on

¹Talamantes, par. 30.

the field of their labors, their task was a vain one, because of the brutal and licentious conduct of the presidial soldiers toward the Indians. Those who should have been the support of the mission movement proved to be its greatest enemies, and contributed not a little to its ultimate failure.

With the lack of success of missionary and presidial effort, there remained but one resource known to Spanish colonization—the creation of a municipality. The Marquis of Aguayo had already recommended this.² The Padre Espinosa, at the same time, had represented to the Viceroy, Riviera, the importance of a chosen population, well supplied with farming implements and domestic animals, as an object lesson to the neophytes. He asked that married men, with their families, should form the guards for the missions; that they should enjoy the pay of soldiers for two years, meanwhile cultivating lands assigned to them, and, at the end of that time, receive a title to the lands they were cultivating. Some poor families of the City of Mexico volunteered for this service, but the great distance precluded the possibility of using them. Levies were made in cities nearer Texas, and among the drafted colonists were many released from the prisons. With such helpers, Aguayo began the work of re-establishing the missions in his famous *entrada* of 1721.³

Upon the recommendation of the Viceroy, the King determined to people Texas as a more effectual protection against the French. Accordingly, in 1722, he gave orders for the transportation of 400 families from the Canary Islands to that province.⁴ Little attention seems to have been paid to this order, but a later cedula of February 14, 1729, bids every vessel clearing for Havana to carry ten or twelve families, destined for Texas. This seems to have been more successful, for we learn the next year that a company of colonists from the Canary Islands are at the little pueblo of Guantitlan, near Mexico, ready to engage in the arduous task of subduing the wild domain of Texas.⁵

²Bancroft: North Mexican States and Texas, I, 631.

³Talamantes, par. 25, 26.

⁴Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, gives date as 1722. Representacion gives the date as 1729, probably referring to the later cedula.

⁵Decree of Casa Fuerte, Sept. 9, 1730.

On the banks of the San Antonio river, near the spot selected for the new settlement, there were already located the presidio of San Antonio de Bexar and five missions. Three of these had recently been transplanted from Eastern Texas.⁶ Only one of them, San José de Aguayo, had been founded originally on this river. The remaining mission, San Antonio de Valero, had been removed from the banks of the Rio Grande. This mission, with the presidio, formed the nucleus of the modern city of San Antonio. Talamantes mentions the sending, in 1718, of a company of soldiers to the banks of the San Antonio river. The Viceroy, Marquis de Valero, had ordered Governor Alarcon of Coahuila to send fifty soldiers of good character to that river. He sent forward a less number of questionable character. At the same time the mission of San Antonio was removed from the Rio Grande.⁷ In a report of 1794 Governor Munoz says that San Antonio was garrisoned in 1715. But as this was before the expedition of St. Denis and Ramon, his statement is more than doubtful. Father Talamantes had access to the best of authorities, the records of the Franciscan colleges of Zacatecas and Querétaro, and his statement that both presidio and mission were founded in 1718 may be taken as determining the date of the founding of San Antonio. All that remained, then, was to add the third element of Spanish colonization—a fully equipped municipality, and the settlement on the San Antonio would complete the full course of Spanish development.

We first hear of the families from the Canary Islands on the 9th of September, 1730. On that day the notary public of the pueblo of Quantitlan formed a list of the various families comprising the new colonists, with a full description of each individual. From the list we learn that the early settlers-to-be of the new villa were as follows: Juan Leal Gonzal, wife, three sons, and one daughter; Juan Carbelo, wife, two sons, and three daughters; Juan Leal y Moso (son of the first man), wife, four sons, and one daughter; Antonio Santio [Santos?], wife, one son, and four daughters; José Padron, and wife; Manuel de la Nis [Niz?], wife, and daughter; Salvador Rodriguez, wife and son; Maria Rodriguez (widow of Juan Cabrara, who died near Vera Cruz), two sons, and one daughter;

⁶Talamantes, par. 29.

⁷Ibid., par. 22.

Maria Rodriguez (widow of Juan Rodriguez Granadillo), and two sons; Maria Melian (widow of Luca Delgado), three sons, and one daughter; five single men: Antonio Rodriguez, Phelipe Perez, José Antonio Perez, Martin Lorenzo de Armas, and Ignacio Lorenzo de Armas—a total of 52 persons. In addition to the names, there was given a full description of each person, comprising the place of his birth, the names of his parents, his station in life, his occupation, and his physical characteristics. The latter were also given for each child. From this description we learn that the colonists came from the islands of Teneriffe, Palma, and Lanzarote.⁸

We next take up the report of the auditor-general, and from it we learn that Francisco Dubal had acted as the conductor of the party from Vera Cruz. The auditor-general says that Dubal shall continue to act in the same capacity and proceeds to map out the daily journeys between Guantitlan and Saltillo. The list contained twenty-five journeys and added four extra days for necessary stops, thus allowing them twenty-nine days to complete the distance (150 to 170 leagues) between Guantitlan and Saltillo.

Since September 6th each person had enjoyed a grant from the royal treasury of four reales per day. In making the estimates for the journey to Saltillo, the auditor-general mentions the number of colonists as fifty-six, although the list of the notary public contains only fifty-two names. As the former number is mentioned in all succeeding dispatches, we may take this as the actual number and leave all surmises for the more curious. The auditor-general still mentions the number of families as ten. He estimates the probable expense of the journey at 852 pesos, with 145 more for the conductor. The latter must have a list of the families to present to the *alcaldes mayores* of the various districts through which they pass, together with a list of the beasts of burden and baggage, to serve as bases for providing for the needs of the company. These lists the conductor must deliver to Colonel Aguirre, the governor of Coahuila. The *alcaldes mayores* must also send to Aguirre an account of the provisions they have furnished. These officers would be duly notified to fulfill their part. The conductor was empowered

⁸Francisco Manuel de Cobanubias, Sept. 9, 1730, *Escrivano Público. Historia* 84.

to ask for additional aid, if his march should be delayed beyond the twenty-nine days assigned for its completion.⁹

Having the reports of the notary public and of the auditor-general before him, the Marquis de Casa Fuerte, at that time the viceroy of New Spain, proceeded to issue the necessary decrees for conveying the colonists to San Antonio de Bexar. First he ordered the alcalde mayor of Quantitlan to deliver the persons mentioned in the list of the notary public to Francisco Dubal, after noting any change in the number on account of births or deaths. He was also to make an inventory of the various belongings of the families and send it to the viceroy to be forwarded to Colonel Aguirre. The march is to begin on the 15th of November.¹⁰ The marquis next issued a decree to the governors of Nueva Leon and Coahuila, to the alcaldes mayores, and to the justizias along the route of march, to render such aid as the colonists might need.¹¹ In this decree he mentions the number of families as fifteen. This number appears in all the following decrees.

With the colonists safely on the road to Saltillo the viceroy sends orders to Colonel Aguirre to provide for the next stage of the route. Aguirre is to send an escort of ten soldiers from Saltillo to the Rio Grande (which in this decree is called both the "Rio Grande" and the "Rio del Norte"). The viceroy gives the list of twenty-three daily journeys, and advises a two days' rest at the Presidio del Norte. This, with certain provisions for saints' days, results in an estimate of thirty-three days for the completion of the journey. The daily allowance for colonists and conductor will make the cost of provisions to be furnished for this part of the journey amount to 1089 pesos. The captain of the Presidio del Norte will provide the escort from that point to San Antonio. Aguirre, in addition to the allowance for provisions, is to furnish each family with a yoke of oxen and necessary implements for cultivating the soil, as well as a metate for grinding corn. The total expense of food for these colonists from Quantitlan to San Antonio de Bexar was estimated at about \$2000. If one considers all the expense necessary to pro-

⁹Report of Don Juan de Oliban Renollede, Auditor General, Oct. 30, 1730. *Historia* 84.

¹⁰Decree of Casa Fuerte, Nov. 8, 1730. *Historia* 84.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1730.

vide each family with oxen and farming implements, and adds this to the probable cost of the voyage from the Canary Islands to Guantitlan, he wonders where later writers get their authority for the statement that the total cost of transportation of these colonists was between seventy and eighty thousand dollars.¹²

Governor Aguirre was also to take an inventory of the possessions of the colonists, to see if any of the articles entrusted to them at Guantitlan were missing. The conductor must give a detailed account of his journey, together with all vouchers for provisions and goods furnished. These vouchers, reports, and inventories are to be sent to the royal treasury at Mexico for payment.¹³ By this system of mutual checks the accounts of the expedition were to be kept straight and the opportunities for speculation minimized.

Having thus arranged for the safe conduct of the families to San Antonio de Bexar, the viceroy next had to send orders to the governor of Texas, or in his absence to the captain of the presidio of San Antonio de Bexar, to prepare for their coming. In the first place, the governor is to aid the colonists with provisions to the extent of four reales per day, and to continue this aid for one year after their arrival, at the same prices that provisions are furnished to the soldiers. It is interesting to note how different this course was from that pursued by the English government toward its colonists. In addition, at the proper season, the governor is to provide seeds for planting, and to see that the families attend to the planting at the proper time, in order to have provisions for the second year. Perhaps this second paternalistic requirement was made necessary by the first, and from what we know of the character of these colonists, as shown later, was not needless. The governor is to take the advice of such experienced persons as may be necessary, and is to send an account to the royal treasury.¹⁴

The next decree may have been necessary from a Spanish standpoint, but to us it seems almost useless. The governor was to make

¹²Bancroft, *North Mexican States and Texas*, I, 652, quoting Morfi, says: "This villa cost the king 80,000 pesos, and today, if sold, would not bring 80 pesos."

¹³Marquis de Casa Fuerte to Colonel Matias de Aguirre, Nov. 28, 1730.

¹⁴Marquis de Casa Fuerte to Don Antonio Bustillo y Bustamente, Nov. 28, 1730. *Historia* 84.

a new list of the persons composing the fifteen families, in order to confer upon them, as the first settlers, and upon their descendants, the title of "*Hijos Dalgos*," or, as we more commonly term it, "Hidalgos." This was a regular honor bestowed upon the first settlers of a new city in the colonies,¹⁵ and seems to have been the survival of a similar custom in Spain during the period of the Moorish wars. The subsequent history of the villa seems to show that this unaccustomed honor did not sit well upon the new recipients. The governor was to select from the heads of these families, six men for the more substantial honor of *regidores*, as well as an *alguacil*, a secretary of the *concejo*, and a major domo to care for the goods and possessions of this "republic."¹⁶ The above officers should select two *alcaldes* for the administration of justice. The governor was to attend the first meeting, to administer oaths and inaugurate the new government. As this was the first political population of Texas, it should be given the title of city and should be the capital of the province. The viceroy reserves to His Majesty, however, the privilege of confirming this decree and of giving the illustrious municipality a coat of arms, should that be his royal pleasure.¹⁷ Evidently the viceroy intended that his new municipality should have a system of paper government as complete, in its way, as the "Fundamental Constitutions" of John Locke. His carefully wrought plans were to apply with even less success to the mesquite plains of Texas, than those of the British philosopher to the pine forests of the Carolinas. With reference to making the new settlement the capital of the province, the exertions of the governor do not seem to have been especially vigorous, for it was not until 1734, under the rule of his successor, that the capital was removed from the presidio of Pilar to San Antonio.¹⁸

In the next decree the governor is to provide temporary lodgings for the colonists and pasturage for their animals, taking care to keep the latter separated from those of the soldiers. He is to instruct the new arrivals how to look after their own animals, to prevent them from straying off, or from being stolen by the Indians.

¹⁵Recopilacion de Indias, Lib. 9, Tít. 6, Ley 6.

¹⁶This same word is often used in referring to a Spanish municipality.

¹⁷Viceroy to Governor of Texas, same date.

¹⁸Bancroft: North Mexican States and Texas, I, 637.

The governor is to continue his paternal care in making sure that no one takes undue advantage of the newcomers. He is to take notice that the colonists have left Guantitlan on the 15th of November, that it will take them about thirty-six days to reach Saltillo and about thirty-three more to reach San Antonio de Bexar, and, accordingly, he has no time to lose in making due provision for them. The governor is also to check up the lists of the conductor, as Colonel Aguirre has done at Saltillo.¹⁹

At this point it may be well to note, with reference to the time consumed on the journey, that a document quoted by Mr. William Corner in his book, "San Antonio de Bexar,"²⁰ says that the colonists appeared before a notary public of Saltillo January 31, 1731, to certify to the new lists and inventories made out by Colonel Aguirre. Evidently the conductor had found it necessary to make use of his privilege to extend the time of the march from Guantitlan to Saltillo. At this rate the colonists could not have reached San Antonio de Bexar before the middle of March, 1731. In this document the number of families is mentioned as sixteen.

The next duty of the governor is to "lay out" the new city. In company with the necessary number of men of discretion, he is to select a site on the western bank of the San Antonio, within a musket shot of the presidio and to the northeast of it, on a slightly elevated plot of ground, large enough to sustain a considerable population. He is to select a spot with a certain supply of pure air and water. The western bank of the river is to be chosen, because the colonists can use temporarily the missions of San José and San Antonio, without fording the river. After selecting the spot, the governor and his associates shall proceed to lay out the streets, squares, plaza, and sites for the church, house of the curate, the public or royal house, and the remaining houses which appear on the accompanying map.²¹ When one reads that the governor was to lay out the streets "straight, according to the map," he wonders, in considering the present state of the older portion of the city, what happened to that map on its journey from the viceroy to the gov-

¹⁹Viceroy to Governor of Texas, same date.

²⁰Page 127.

²¹Unfortunately the map does not accompany the decree at the present time.

error. Perhaps it is only another case of the discrepancy between plan and execution common to Spanish America.

The territory of the new municipality is to be divided as follows: The residence portion, with the church as a center, is to consist of a square of 1093 varas.²² This square is to be divided into 144 blocks, each 240 feet square, and separated from its neighbors by a street forty feet wide. Each family is to be given a block for a residence lot. It is supposed that the above number of blocks will be sufficient for the probable population of the new municipality for several years to come. Each family is to line the borders of its building lot with trees, and to erect as commodious a house as possible, with a patio, corral, and all necessary buildings. The leading families were to be assigned lands about the plaza, but in other respects the assignments and buildings erected were to be as nearly equal as possible. Care should be taken to provide for the cleanliness of the premises, and that the directions of houses and streets should coincide.

Outside the residence portion came the common pasture lands, extending on every side 1093 varas. A fifth part of this land was to be set aside "*para propios de la Republica.*" From the limits of this pasture land another measurement of 2186 varas in every direction, included the land destined for labors. In the later colonization law of the Mexican Republic,²³ a labor consisted of a tract of land one thousand varas square, and it is probable that the labors mentioned above were about the same size. Each family was to receive a labor, together with equal privileges of using the water from the arroyo,²⁴ or from the San Antonio. A fifth portion of this land was also to be reserved for public use, and the remainder to be given to future colonists. The different families were to be given a title for their lands in the name of His Majesty, in accordance with a "law of the Indies."²⁵ This decree was to be deposited in the house of the concejo, as part of the record for land titles.

The governor was to furnish sheep, goats and cattle for each family and render account of these, together with everything else

²²A vara is about 33 inches.

²³Laws of Constituent Congress of Coahuila and Texas, No. 16, Art. 11.

²⁴Probably San Pedro Creek.

²⁵Recopilacion de Indias, Lib. 9, Tit. 12, Ley 9.

provided for the colonists. He was to attend to the matter with the zeal and energy that its great importance warranted, with the certainty that a favorable beginning would largely determine the subsequent ease and well-being of the colonists.²⁶

Having made due provision for a reasonable amount of this world's goods for the colonists, the viceroy finally turns his attention to the spiritual needs of his new municipality. He issues a decree to the Bishop of Guadalajara, to send a resident of the oratory of San Carlos, a zealous person, to administer the sacraments and perform the other religious duties for the inhabitants of Texas' new capital. The person selected is to act both as curate and as ecclesiastic vicar judge. He is to be given a salary of 400 pesos, and his pay is to begin on the day he departs for his new field. He is also to hasten the erection of the parish church.²⁷ It is interesting to note that the corner-stone of this edifice was not laid until 1744.

With this decree the viceroy ended his hard day's work. It certainly seemed that he had taken every caution that human ingenuity could devise for the successful founding and the steady growth of this distant outpost of Spanish civilization. But the viceroy lived in the days when the Spanish monarchy had degenerated, and was working against an almost insuperable obstacle to rapid growth, in the person of the fierce Texas Indian, and with most inefficient means in "the fifteen families, consisting of fifty-six persons, come from the Canary Islands, for the purpose of colonizing the Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar." One has but to read the later criticisms of Father Morfi²⁸ to realize the futility of all paternal legislation, and especially of this experiment on the frontier of Texas. But the experiment, unsuccessful as it was in its realization, resulted in the founding of the first Texas municipality.

²⁶Viceroy to Governor of Texas, same date.

²⁷Viceroy to Sr. Dr. Don Nicholas Carlos Gomes de Cervantes, Nov. 28, 1730.

²⁸Memorias para la Historia de Texas. MS.